



The Johnson Letter

From the desk of
Michigan State Senator

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Senator Johnson and Representative Ruth Johnson discuss legislation addressing intermediate school districts

Ruth A. Johnson assumed the lead role in crafting legislation to generate accountability within Michigan intermediate school district system and ensure that the money meant for our children reaches the classroom.

Rep. Johnson sent out numerous Freedom of Information Act requests to the Oakland ISD. The FOIA requests covered how much of the OISD budget is spent on direct services to the classroom; travel expenses; salaries, contracts, and benefits; contracts with the OISD; board minutes; and the amount of the OISD budget spent on lobbying, public relations, and communications.

Over the course of more than a year, Rep. Johnson had to make a number of repeat FOIA requests to receive the information that she had requested. After making several attempts over more than a year she has received the majority of the information.

In response to Rep. Johnson's efforts, the House Subcommittee on Intermediate School District Review was formed in May of 2003, with Rep. Johnson serving as chair, to help in the review of the Oakland ISD. In that same month, the Subcommittee was given power to subpoena the Oakland ISD employees and documents by House Resolution 60.

The Subcommittee traveled to different parts of the state to hold public hearings to gain insight and testimony on the proposed legislation. A large number of individuals turned out for these hearings to convey their thoughts on the legislation.

Beginning in March of 2004, the Subcommittee began to hold hearings by subpoenaing certain administrators and documents of the OISD. This list included former superintendent James Redmond who was charged with embezzlement by Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox that same month.

Following convincing support from the full House, the first round of legislation will be brought up for review by the Senate Education Committee. In addition, Rep. Johnson, along with other House and Senate colleagues, is working on the second round of legislation to address conflict of interest, millages, and disclosure by Michigan's ISDs. Listed below is a description of both phases of the ISD package.

State Tackles Intermediate School Issues

Following alarming reports combined with a Whall Group audit in the fall of 2002 regarding concerns at the Oakland Intermediate School District (ISD) Rep.

Inside this issue:

Intermediate School District

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ACCOUNTABILITY 101 – PHASE I PACKAGE

HB 4338 (H-7): Election Reforms: Recall, Popular Elections, Voting Districts

- Introduces election reforms into the ISD system by establishing the right of recall for ISD Board members by the constituency and the Governor. This bill also allows for the constituency of an ISD to vote for board members by petition.

Intermediate School District cont.

House Bill 4947 (H-1): Sunshine on constituent board elected ISD Board procedures

- Clarifies procedures for selection of an ISD Board under a constituent school district selected board system to eliminate secret selection procedures.
- **HB 5376 (H-3):** Competitive Bidding Practices
- Requires ISDs to competitively bid construction and remodel projects, and changes bid posting requirements to require fewer postings in newspapers and require posting on a designated website, saving ISDs dollars.

HB 5458 (H-2): ISD Budget Approval Process

- Increases local district participation in ISD budget process by establishing an approval process for the ISD budget.

House Bill 5530 (H-1): Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

- Places Department of Education rules regarding Special Education Advisory Committees into statute.

PHASE II ISD PACKAGE:

HB 5475 (Bradstreet): Specifying items for disclosure; posting information on the internet

HB 5627 (Johnson): Tied to HB 5475 to put information being disclosed into Form B

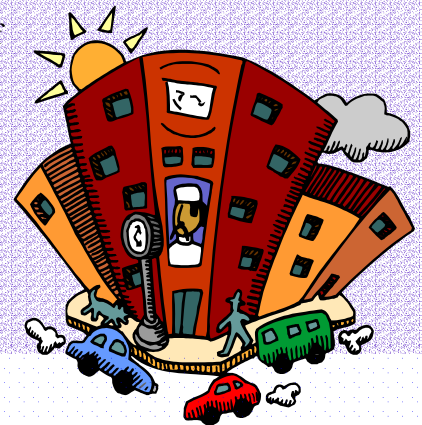
HB 5921 (Johnson): Disclosure; ISD board members cannot hold another public office; ISD board must adopt a conflict of interest policy; limit on board members or administrators of \$44.00 on receiving goods or services from anyone doing business with the ISD; ISD cannot enter into a contract if the board member or administrator is employed or does business with company, has ownership in company, or business affiliation with the company; and an ISD must ensure that employment contracts with administrators have moral turpitude clauses

HB 5839 (Johnson): Millage; reconsideration of millage if it is determined by Treasury that it was misused; sunset on ISD millages of 25 years

HB 5850 (Johnson): Employees of an ISD CANNOT use ISD money for alcohol, jewelry, gifts, entertainment, golf, or any other illegal item; penalties of 93 days in jail or \$1,000 to \$5,000; person who knowingly violates the competitive bidding process would be guilty of a felony of a year in prison or 10% of the cost of the project; person who knowingly violates proceeds from a bond or permits misuse would be guilty of a felony of a year in prison or 10% of the cost of the project

HB 5851 (Johnson): Sentencing guidelines for competitive bidding process and misuse of bond money

HB 5475 (Palmer): Random financial and performance audits by the Michigan Dept. of Treasury of five intermediate school districts every two year.



Four CORE bills passed by Senate

The state Senate passed four bills Thursday designed to revitalize downtowns and commerce centers across Michigan and create job opportunities. The Creating Opportunities for Renewed Economies - CORE - is geared toward expanding and coordinating many state economic programs to operate more effectively, as well as provide incentives for growth in cities and villages. The package is designed to help communities revitalize their central business and residential districts, initiate new growth and create job opportunities.

Senate Bill 1201 would allow two Downtown Development Authorities to have one board overseeing their operations. Designed to allow municipalities to designate a historical neighborhood tax increment authority, SB 1202 would help communities eliminate the causes of deterioration, and promote residential and economic growth within a historic district. SB 1203 would allow a DDA to operate a parking violations bureau for a local unit of government. The legislation would provide more flexibility and help local units of government increase their cost savings. Amending the Downtown Development Authority Act, SB 1240 would allow DDAs to use funds for the development of marketing initiatives and to contract for broadband and wireless technology services to create downtown “hot spots.” The bills now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

JUNE HELPFUL HINTS

Consumer Resources on the Web

Protect yourself from the West Nile Virus, by learning the facts about this disease that affected 19 Michigan residents last year:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/resources/WNV_factsheet_061903.pdf.

Residents who are sensitive to the air quality – due to allergies or asthma – may wish to check the Ozone map of Michigan before heading out for the day or weekend. The site provides a list of Ozone Action Day Advisories, and maps out current air quality readings from across the state, visit the site at:

<http://www.deq.state.mi.us/aqi/o3.asp>.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture invites children to play games, read stories and find out about animals and farming at Kidz Korner:

<http://www.mda.state.mi.us/kids/index.html>.

Children can learn about the history of Michigan through activities, projects and documents on the Michigan Historical Center's Kids' Stuff website, located at:

http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-15481_19268_20778---,00.html

Find ways to save money by making your home more efficient, for tips visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savers website, located at

http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumerinfo/energy_savers/.

Register to vote: July 6th is the last day to register to vote for the August primary. To print off a voter registration form visit: <http://www.michigan.gov/sos/>.

Save money by learning new ways to conserve gasoline, follow this link for more information:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/gasconservation_87283_7_87625_7.html.

Send an e-mail thank you card to a member of the United States Armed Forces by visiting:

<http://www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html>.

Plan a trip in Michigan to visit local arts, history or cultural events, a state calendar of events is available at:

http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17447_18625---,00.html.

Participate in Michigan's Project Great Start and help make reading to your children a daily activity. Resources for parents, including helpful tips, reading lists and other information, is available at:

<http://www.michigan.gov/greatstart/>.

Senator Johnson has an updated website available to constituents, for bill searches, filing comments and ordering publications. To visit the website, go to:

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/johnson/index.htm>.

Help your children fight the summer blahs and continue to learn throughout the summer, tips on literacy activities are available at: <http://www.michigan.gov/emi/0,1303,7-102--69358--,00.html>.

Prepare for the day your child goes to college, college saving tips and plan descriptions are available at:

<http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid>.

Questions or Comments?

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